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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes research on curriculum renewal efforts in small rural schools in the Northwest. The Northwest region includes Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Curriculum renewal involves activities aimed at meeting state reform standards and educational improvement initiatives. An examination of accreditation standards among states in the Northwest found that there was a move away from traditional process standards toward the articulation of common curriculum goals, public reporting of school performance, and locally-driven self-study. Standardization requirements can help provide a context for local educational reform and curriculum renewal. Four studies by the Rural Education Program of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory focused on the role of educational leadership in curriculum renewal and three curriculum renewal methods: community-based, peer-based, and consultant-based support. Each curriculum renewal method is briefly described, including a list of key elements necessary for the method to succeed and benefits resulting from using the method. In February 1995, the Rural Education Program conducted a survey of the priorities of small, rural school districts concerning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The study found that rural school districts were most concerned with strengthening instructional strategies, aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction, integrating curriculum, and preparing students for the next century. In March 1995, participants at the Regional Rural Curriculum Symposium identified issues affecting curriculum renewal in small rural schools, including professional development, state standards and outreach, assessment and accountability, and site-based management. The report concludes with recommendations for encouraging successful curriculum renewal in small, rural school districts. Contains 12 references. (LP)

THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
PROGRAM REPORT

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CURRICULUM RENEWAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT FOR SMALL, RURAL SCHOOLS: STANDARDIZATION ISSUES

Prepared by
Mary Queitzsch

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PREFACE

The rural environment demands a self-sufficient, enterprising lifestyle. If you cannot maintain and repair your own tools-of-the-trade, then time, energy and resources will be needlessly spent "at the shop in town". Traditions, on the one hand, have constrained rural folk to persist in using methods which are "tried and true". On the other hand, the demands of rural living have promoted creative innovations for improving productivity. This tension between conventional wisdom and new ideas, fixing things locally to save the costs of "going to town", and the ambivalent feelings of both pride and shame for our "home-made" possessions apply equally to rural schools as it does to rural families.

Current discussions of school reform would seem to suggest that educational improvement is a new idea to be imposed upon schools and classrooms. Yet, it was more than one hundred years ago that the Washington State Legislature prescribed outcomes for public school students, as "Every child in the state should be able at least to read intelligibly, to write rapidly in a neat, legible hand, to be able to express his thoughts either orally or in writing, in a clear, concise, English style, to perform the ordinary business calculations of arithmetic, to keep his own accounts, to know the history of his country, the nature of its government and the duties of its citizens." (September 1894)

As professionals, rural educators are expected to seek ways for improving upon their work. Rural educators like rural families, do not have the luxury of disposable time and resources to expend upon frivolous experimentation. Above all else, rural practitioners maintain the credo, "don't fix noth'en, what hain't broke". It is not surprising, then, when school reform efforts encounter resistance and skepticism in rural communities. How then, is true and lasting educational renewal supported and sustained in small, rural schools?

This report provides an overview of the rural context for curriculum renewal--the demands small schools encounter, the priorities they hold and the approaches they have fashioned to get the job done locally. Even with limited time and resources, small, rural schools have demonstrated that effective school improvement efforts can take place by their own volition. This report provides a spring board for exploring how small, rural schools can be encouraged to create their own "tradition of educational excellence".

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INTRODUCTION

According to the National Education Goals Panel (1991), by the year 2000, we would like our children starting school ready to learn, more students graduating from high school, all students demonstrating competency over challenging subject matter, our students ranking first in science and mathematics achievement, our citizens being literate, our schools being free of drugs and violence, our teachers preparing our children for the 21st century, and parents being actively involved in the academic growth of our children. In a world of constant change, how do we meet these goals, especially in small, rural school districts?

The *GOALS 2000: Educate America Act*, signed into law in 1994, encourages educational improvement to be accomplished through local and state efforts, not by federal control. Emphasis is placed on building community partnerships, through parents and businesses. Based on this movement, reform of education lies within the individual states. States have responded by examining their current policies and aligning them with the national goals. Consequently, states are having to examine their curriculum frameworks and encourage new methods of instruction and assessment. The responsibility for renewal also rests on the individual school districts, altering their curriculum to meet state standards, community values, and the needs of their students to address the challenges of the 21st century (---1995a, ---1995b).

The purpose of this report is to synthesize the current information on successful curriculum renewal processes in small schools of the northwest. We must accept the concept that education is a process and like the world, is in constant motion. We must examine how the curricula and its relationship to instruction and assessment supports these goals in a holistic manner. Finally, we must fine tune the question--*How does a rural school district successfully institute a curriculum renewal process to meet these goals?*

This report paints the backdrop of rural education in the northwest as schools engage in curriculum renewal. Four research studies by Jack Stoops document how rural and small schools are engaging in curriculum renewal in the northwest:

Curriculum Renewal: What Is Involved for Small, Rural Schools?
(Handbook I--May 1992)

The Use of Consortia to Engage in Curriculum Renewal
(Handbook II--August 1992)

The Use of Peer-Based Support in Rural Settings to Effect Curriculum Renewal
(Handbook III--September 1993)

The Use of Community-Based Support to Effect Curriculum Renewal in Rural Settings
(Handbook IV--November 1994)

Two additional sources of information supplement Stoops' work--a regional needs assessment survey and a regional symposium, both conducted in 1995 to further focus on curriculum renewal in small, rural schools.

CURRICULUM RENEWAL

Curriculum renewal may be defined as "the process of those steps, procedures, and activities schools engage in to bring about change, modifications, refinement and improvement to the desired learner outcomes, materials, assessment procedures and instructional strategies." (Stoops, 1991).

It is difficult to talk about renewal without the context of reform and restructuring. Renewal consists of the improvement activities which help meet the state reform standards and contribute to the restructuring of education across the nation (Conley, 1991).

In order to discuss changes in curriculum and alignment with instruction and assessment, the terms need to be defined. According to Conley (1993):

> Changes in *curriculum* call into question what is worth knowing and how knowledge should best be organized. Much of the traditional structure and content of the curriculum is being closely reexamined, from the national to the state to the local level. Many national subject-matter organizations and state departments of education are issuing new curriculum guidelines.
>
> The variable *instruction* entails all the strategies used to engage students in learning and the assumptions educators have regarding the relationship of the child to the learning experience. Instructional strategies are beginning to include the learner to a greater degree. Learners construct meaning from the experiences presented to them; not everyone learns the same thing from the same experience. There is a greater emphasis on developing the ability to think, reason, and solve problems, rather than simply to memorize information.
>
> *Assessment* encompasses the strategies by which teacher and learner determine the results of the learning process. The goal of assessment is to ascertain the student's performance in relation to outcomes and to enable learners to take more control over their learning. The trend is toward holistic, integrated forms of assessment that serve the primary purpose of improving student performance and the secondary purpose (if at all) of passing a judgment on students or ranking them relative to one another (p. 108).

Curriculum Renewal in Rural and Small Schools in the Northwest

Rural northwest schools might evoke images of a slower, simpler pace for common students within communities of shared traditional values. To perpetuate this myth is to do great disservice to our rural schools and communities. Rural communities are in dynamic states which approach the boom and bust era of the frontier. The pace and scope of change in rural areas is so great that it approaches chaos. Demographic shifts have created extremely diverse expectations for schools and students. If ever there was an average student, it is not now. The regulatory environment has constrained resources but increased requirements. Yet existing mandates are replaced with new expectations in frequent and unpredictable ways. Rural education is anything but slow paced and simple, but it does continue to have limited resources and professional isolation. There is little time for thoughtfully planned improvement, let alone reflection about the art of teaching.

In 1991, Stoops (1992a) developed a regional picture of states' influence and control over curricula. There were some individual differences as well as commonalties. Several common procedures existed within basic education accreditation standards (Table 1). It was found that much of the focus was moving from traditional process standards towards the articulation of common curriculum goals, public reporting of school performance, and locally-driven self-study.

Table 1
Status of Major Accreditation Standards in the Northwest States

Procedures	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington
Self Study	Yes (*annual)	Yes (*10 yrs)	Yes (*10 yrs)	Yes	Yes (*7 yrs)
Report Card	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Student Outcomes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Common Student Program Assessment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Onsite visits	Yes (*10 yrs)	Yes (*E=7 yrs, S=10 yrs)	No	Yes (*6 yrs)	Yes (*6 yrs)
Other	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NWASC**	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

* Time cycle
** Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

(Stoops, 1992a, p.13; updated 1995)

According to the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (Steadman, 1990), for initial accreditation, a self-evaluation study is to be carried out by the faculty, students, and community representatives according to the Commission on Schools. Self studies encourage schools and communities to reflect on what they are trying to achieve in their educational programs. School report cards, defined student outcomes and assessment

procedures allow schools to gauge the effectiveness of their own programs. These standardization requirements help provide a context for local educational reform and curriculum renewal.

THE NWREL CURRICULUM RENEWAL PROJECT

Background

With only minimal time, resources and expertise, how could small rural schools possibly continue to achieve local, state and professional standards for educational quality and equity? The Rural Education Program of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) began to explore how small, rural schools are adapting to this dynamic environment and accomplishing meaningful curriculum improvements. The question becomes one of how to **optimize** the efficiency of the curriculum renewal process in small-scale organizations.

Northwest small schools are taking on these challenges in extremely creative ways that provide us with lessons in leadership. Curriculum renewal can, does and will continue to occur in small, rural schools. Small, isolated, rural school districts are facing increasing curriculum renewal needs with limited resources.

Of the four studies conducted by Stoops, the first study identified the need for strong leadership, and the following three studies each focused on a specific curriculum renewal method. It was found in the first study that reflection on current curriculum renewal practices was needed in order to make informed decisions. Some districts were currently in a successful curriculum renewal process, while other districts were struggling with issues, such as the need for additional resources. Stoops found that curriculum change deserves attention and allocation of resources to effect renewal, that many small, rural schools are unaware that promising approaches exist which address limitations of curriculum renewal, and that approaches are needed which stretch scarce resources to provide training, technical assistance, and opportunity for small, remote schools to build their capacity. Through this study, Stoops reminds us that fundamental roles of instructional leadership are essential for rural school survival (Stoops, 1992a):

1. Rural educational leadership must be proactive, seeking validated information about new ideas, policies and mandates so that they can be acted upon quickly and efficiently.

2. Rural educational leadership must delegate responsibility for fulfilling roles normally carried out by specialists in larger organizations. Community members, school personnel and students can all assist the organization in "environmental scanning", planning, and design functions. For example, both site-based councils and ad hoc citizen committees have been used to conduct needs assessments and research to help school boards weigh the merits of alternatives and make informed choices about curriculum issues.

3. Rural educational leadership must maintain local ownership for decisions and actions. Defaulting to urban solutions or the creativity of external consultants do not produce satisfactory results for rural schools. Delaying decisions to act in spite of a clear timetable for completion also adversely affects results. Standing agenda items which promote continuous, incremental improvement have greater sustainable benefit than "action-by-crises."

4. Rural educational leadership can achieve greater efficiency by minimizing the duplication of effort. For example, if the minor adaptation of a self-study process fulfills more than one function, then the rural school should pursue this approach.

5. Rural educational leadership must acknowledge greater ties to state and federal initiatives since an increasing level of support for school programs is from state and national sources rather than local resources.

Three Curriculum Renewal Methods

Goals 2000 encourages a grassroots approach to change in the education system. Every community is charged with the responsibility of improving its children's education by involving community members and parents (---1995a). For the three studies, approaches were sought in rural areas in each of the five states (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington) which incorporated a bottom-up approach to change. Based on research and input from practitioners, three general methods of curriculum renewal were identified: community-based support, peer-based support, and consortium-based support. The purpose was to examine successful practices of curriculum renewal in rural areas (Table 2). Thereby, documenting realistic options for school districts engaged in reform efforts.

Table 2
Participants in the Three Curriculum Renewal Methods by State

State	Community-Based Support	Peer-Based Support	Consultant-Based Support
Alaska	Alaska Gateway School District	Alaska Teacher Researcher Network (ATRN)	SW Region/Dillingham City School Districts
Idaho	New Meadows School District	Bitterroot Teachers'. Network	N. Idaho Vocational-Education Cooperative
Montana	Scobey School District	Big Sky Telegraph	South Central Curriculum Consortium
Oregon	Pinehurst School District	Lane County Science and Math Teachers' Cadre	Union-Wallowa County Consortium
Washington	Quileute Tribal School	WA Council of Teachers of Mathematics (WCTM)	Blue Mountain Small Schools Consortium

Community-Based Support

Community members are utilized to maximize the human resources available for curriculum articulation and delivery. Using citizen and parental assistance as in-kind contributions from the rural communities is an effective way to offset inadequate resources. Retired professionals, homemakers, residents with special expertise, and other individuals can often be recruited to lend their skills and energy to curriculum renewal efforts. This approach enhances community ownership and support for locally relevant curriculum. Schools that value widespread community support and involvement, and presently have the local human resources necessary for curriculum renewal, may want to consider this approach. On the other hand, professional expertise in accreditation requirements and pedagogy may not be present. (Stoops, 1994)

Key elements for this method to be successful, include:

- There must be effective lines of communication between school district and community members
- There must be adequate funding to support each project
- Key community member(s) must have active roles in each project
- School district leadership needs to support the renewal projects

Benefits of community-based support include:

- Improved communication, collaboration and understanding
- Increased community unity that demonstrates a high level of caring for their students and sensitivity to critical cultural elements
- Improved family relations among parents and their students
- Increased trust and rapport established
- Increased ownership in the school and its activities with maintenance of local control in the curriculum renewal process
- Increased pride in high school students decreases their out-migration following graduation

Peer-Based Support

Teacher networks within and across schools enable shared expertise and resources. Teacher peer support provide opportunities for professional growth and awareness of resources necessary for desired curriculum and instructional renewal work. Peers helping each other by sharing knowledge, skills, and resources can be a powerful model for curriculum renewal. In addition, the expanding use of technology in telecommunications, audio and computer conferences, are effective tools that have enhanced peer-based networking and support. This approach may be appropriate for small, remote rural schools with a history of working together to meet curriculum renewal needs, particularly for secondary and other specialized school personnel who feel professionally isolated. On the other hand, peer support systems do not necessarily gain local community ownership or for the instructional program, may not insure relevance, sufficiently expand the resources available, or guarantee compliance with state standards.

Teachers' professional networks are a powerful and inexpensive model for teachers and school districts to consider for meeting their specialized curriculum renewal needs. While participation in networks leads to more efficacy among members, a word of caution must be given. Teacher membership in networks is very much determined by personal needs and may or may not contribute to a district's overall curriculum articulation. School boards and district administrators need to recognize the value of networks and use their teacher-members as district resources for curriculum renewal. Administrators should be alert for those teachers who belong to networks and first approach them with efforts of support in the network endeavors. If administrators are unaware, they may lose the resources teachers can bring to their district. (Stoops, 1993)

Key elements for this method to be successful, include:

- Teachers clearly make all of the major operational decisions for their respective networks
- Each network has an excellent communications system that efficiently engages teachers within and across districts
- Teachers join new collaborative communities in which they form strong bonds sustaining their continuing professionalization
- Within these networks, the value of each individual is stressed and no classroom need is considered insignificant, members diligently strive to assist each other

Benefits of peer-based support include:

- Allows for local input and ownership
- Develops materials and approaches with high classroom utility

- Provides assistance and even leadership in meeting new state curriculum standards
- Keeps members current with the latest curriculum and instructional developments
- Provides vital follow-up and support for the new innovations they employ in their classrooms

Consortium-Based Support

Small districts have formed cooperatives to share the services of a curriculum consultant and, in other cases, they worked closely with Educational Service Districts and higher education faculty. Beyond the advantages to small schools in offsetting limited resources, cooperative efforts provide benefits which address issues of community resistance, professional isolation, and teacher retention. This approach may be especially appropriate for districts with limited resources and/or experience as members of a consortium or cooperative. This provides for the services of a specialist with expertise and awareness of curriculum and instructional options. However, this may reduce local ownership and responsibility for the instructional program. (Stoops, 1992a)

Key elements for this method to be successful, include:

- Consortia should set goals and purpose(s) first
- Engage teachers and building administrators in the early planning
- Appoint a curriculum director or a master teacher who meets the consortium's needs
- Individual member districts must realize that they have to give a little in order for the consortium to thrive
- Member districts should not attempt to limit their consortium's collective vision
- Keep the public abreast of the consortium's activities

Benefits of consortia-based support include:

- Maximize resources
- Secure the services of a curriculum consultant, a master teacher or a helping teacher
- Relieve over-extended staff

- Produce high utility curriculum standards
- Reduce teacher isolation
- Provide professional development

Summation of the Curriculum Renewal Project

After three years of case studies in small rural schools in the Northwest engaged in curriculum renewal, Stoops (1991) found a common set of curriculum and instructional needs:

1. Small schools find that much of the curriculum materials and delivery strategies available are well suited to the needs of large, metropolitan districts, but lack the context and integration necessary for the small school setting. Curriculum and instructional delivery strategies developed for the mass market fail to be sensitive to unique rural values and conditions.

2. Small schools lack the professional time and resources for implementing strategies such as curriculum development or school restructuring in order to meet new state standards.

3. Because of such unique rural instructional contexts as multigrade classrooms and schools, single-building districts and very small instructional staffs, the delivery of curriculum that meets state standards often requires special instructional approaches different from those found in metropolitan districts. Small schools lack access to research validated procedures and practices that facilitate meeting state standards for rural and small schools. Their choices are limited and often made by defaulting for metropolitan district models.

4. Research documenting these "rural" alternative instructional approaches is quite rare.

5. State standards which are "process-oriented" rather than "outcome-oriented" may prescribe a particular structure which is not sufficiently flexible to accommodate effective small school approaches to the instructional program.

RESEARCH STUDIES

As stated in the introduction, two sources of information further defined the needs and efforts of northwest rural and small schools in the context of curriculum renewal--Curriculum Renewal Needs Assessment Study for Small, Rural Schools and the 1995 Regional Rural Curriculum Renewal Symposium.

Curriculum Renewal Needs Assessment Study for Small, Rural Schools

In February of 1995, the Rural Education Program asked a sample of small, rural school districts to comment on district priorities concerning curriculum, instruction and assessment issues. They were also asked to indicate what type of barriers were present. The list of issues was based on the results of the 1994 Northwest Regional Needs Assessment (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1994).

The survey was sent to a random sample of 251 small, rural school districts in the geographic region of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. These were districts having fewer than 2500 students and a rural population of 85 percent or greater.

A total of 120 districts responded for a return rate of 48 percent. The enrollment of the districts ranged from 7 to 2268, with a median of 305. The average rural factor was 99.6 percent.

According to the results (Table 3), rural school districts were most concerned with strengthening instructional strategies, aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction, integrating curriculum, and preparing students for the next century.

Table 3
Percent of Small, Rural Districts Affirming Curriculum, Instructional and Assessment Issues as Priorities (n=120)

Rank	Curriculum, Instructional and Assessment Issues	Percent YES
1	Strengthening instructional strategies such as critical thinking and cooperative learning to improve student achievement	83.3%
2	Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction	81.7%
3	Integrating curriculum across subjects and levels	78.3%
4	Preparing students for the 21st century global marketplace	70.8%
5	Incorporating and meeting state standards and requirements	67.5%
6	Identifying desired learner outcomes and performance goals	67.5%
7	Developing and implementing a process for renewing and restructuring the curriculum	66.7%
8	Developing alternative assessments that are performance-based and authentic	66.7%
9	Specifying the scope and sequences of topics to be covered in various subjects and grades	64.2%
10	Developing special programs for exceptional children	53.3%
11	Implementing research-based teaching strategies	50.0%
12	Developing community-based learning experiences for students	50.0%
13	Establishing textbook and other instructional materials adoption procedures	38.3%
14	Specifying time requirements for the school day, year, and for particular subjects	32.5%
15	Improving the use of standardized testing	32.5%
16	Mandating specific core subjects, such as English and mathematics	30.8%
17	Setting graduation requirements	27.5%
18	Mandating additional instruction, such as HIV/AIDS and the American economic system	25.8%
19	Mandating a testing program at specific grades in critical areas	22.5%
20	Developing special programs for those whom English is a second language	15.0%

Four out of five schools reported that strengthening instructional strategies such as critical thinking and cooperative learning to improve student achievement, and aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction, were top priorities. Approximately two-thirds of the schools indicated six issues as priorities: (1) integrating curriculum across subjects and levels; (2) preparing students for the 21st century; (3) incorporating and meeting state standards and requirements; (4) identifying desired learner outcomes and performance goals; (5) developing and implementing a process for renewing and restructuring the curriculum; and (6) developing alternative assessments that are performance-based and authentic. Approximately one-half of the schools indicated four additional issues as priorities: (1) specifying the scope and sequence of topics to be covered in various subjects and grades; (2) developing special programs for exceptional children; (3) implementing research-based teaching strategies; and (4) developing community-based learning experiences for students.

When asked to identify the barriers rural districts encountered in achieving curriculum goals, respondents indicated insufficient time, funding, expertise, and personnel, as well as lack of consensus about desired results (Table 4).

Table 4
Percent of Small, Rural Districts Reporting Specific Barriers to Curriculum Renewal: Weighted Average Percent for Each Barrier (n=120)

Barrier		Percent
Insufficient:		
	Time	22.3%
	Funding	17.9%
	Expertise	14.1%
	Personnel	12.5%
	Technology	7.0%
Lack of Consensus:		
	in School	7.6%
	in Community	5.1%
No Opportunity to Join:		
	a Network	2.2%
	a Consortium	1.9%
Problems with Community:		
	Isolation	5.7%
	Disinterest	2.8%
	Partnerships	0.9%
Total		100.0%

The participants focused on the barriers preventing or hindering the districts from meeting these renewal priorities. Table 4 shows that **all areas** were considered to be a constraint to some degree in meeting district priorities. The emphasis was placed on the category of insufficient resources, especially time, funding, expertise and personnel. Insufficient technology, lack of consensus in the school, and community isolation were also indicated as being particular hindrances to a successful curriculum renewal process.

In reviewing the results, it is not surprising to have the insufficient resource categories (time, funding, expertise and personnel) as the most noted constraints, regardless of the issue or priority ranking. Within rural communities, the tax base to support public education is normally lower than their urban counterparts. There is little, if any, industry or trade in the northwest rural areas, making the school districts dependent on property taxes. The funding equation for federal funds to the public schools reflects total per capita or enrollment. Therefore, the smaller the population or enrollment, the fewer the dollars.

Insufficient time was the top constraint for all of the curriculum issues. For example, many rural teachers have multiple class preparations, plus non-instructional duties before and after school. School buildings within a rural district are separated by many miles, thus augmenting the isolation factor. In addition, some school districts have to share a superintendent and a principal; therefore, extra administrative duties become the teachers' responsibilities. With instructional time, professional development time and class preparation time at a premium, there is little time if any available for curriculum renewal issues, let alone specialized staff to accomplish this work.

Educational reform is to be a grassroots movement. Therefore the constraint of "lack of consensus within the schools" in meeting district priorities is significant. In order for reform to be grassroots in origin, there has to be consensus at the school level. Perhaps this indicates that questions exist about implementing state and national goals at the school level. This raises questions concerning site-based management, block grants and/or mandated state reform. For example, starting at the school level, should there be agreement about the mission of the school district? At the state level, should there be agreement about the use of federal funds through the block grants? Would it be best if the state mandated change? And at the national level, are the education goals translatable to the rural localities?

School improvement is a locally-defined, locally driven process for which all school districts must assume responsibility. The specific constraint of "insufficient expertise" may be a signal to our teacher preparation programs. Perhaps the institutes of higher education should take a closer look at the issues of preparing teachers and school administrators to work in rural areas and how to incorporate curriculum reform as part of their day-to-day responsibilities.

Regional Rural Curriculum Renewal Symposium: 1995

In March of 1995, a group of curriculum experts and practitioners from the northwest (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington) were assembled to discuss curriculum renewal in rural and small schools. The Regional Rural Curriculum Renewal Symposium participants agreed that all of the issues in the survey were priorities and that it was helpful to see how they were ranked by the rural schools. The charge for the symposium was to synthesize the standardization issues for curriculum in the states and agree upon a common set of needs, barriers, and strategies for curriculum renewal in small, rural schools.

The participants identified four issues affecting curriculum renewal in small rural schools--professional development, state standards and outreach, assessment and accountability and site-based management. The standard procedures expected by the state were then assembled for a regional view of state standardization practices affecting curriculum renewal.

Table 5
State Standardization Issues Affecting Curriculum Renewal: 1995

ISSUES	STATE PROCEDURE
Professional Development	• University and school district collaboration for professional development was usually initiated by the school district for all five states. • Four states had re-certification requirements, six credit hours per every five years. The notable exception was Oregon which has no re-certification requirements after initial standard certification. • In the area of professional development, the states ranged in number of days or hours for required inservice in the school districts. Idaho indicated a minimum of four days a year. Alaska did not have a minimum requirement of days, but stipulated that they could not exceed ten days a year. • Two states have established ESD's (Education Service Districts) to provide support services for professional development.
State Standards and Outreach	• State frameworks were in many different stages of development across the states. Statements of student outcomes will be based on state standards. • State dissemination of materials was uniform. All states required requests from the school districts in order to provide technical assistance.
State Assessment and Accountability	• Assessment was standard across the states. Top priority was given to grades 4, 8, 11 and 12. But methods of assessment varied: three states use standardized norm-referenced tests, one state gives the option to use a standardized test of local choice, and the fifth state uses a state designed criterion referenced test. • All five states required a public form of accountability: a state accountability report card. • State graduation requirements varied greatly across the states. A discrepancy was apparent in the nature of units used to report this information, i.e.: credit hours, semester hours, or Carnegie units.
Site-Based Management	• It was found that site-based management was used in all five states, but to varying degrees. • Textbook adoption could greatly influence the path of curriculum renewal. It was found that in three states, the districts had freedom of choice. In the other two states, there was an established adoption list from which the districts could choose.

Based on Stoops' studies, the needs assessment survey, the standardization practices and experience, the participants concurred upon a list of basic needs for small, rural schools engaged in successful curriculum renewal. Along with the list of needs, the participants identified a list of common barriers found in rural and small schools actively engaged in reform measures.

Needs

- There needs to be motivation for purposeful curriculum renewal, whether it's from the school board, the local community, the school district, or through state reform efforts.
- There is a need for all parties to understand that curriculum renewal is ongoing, and should be a part of the job.
- There is a need for all teachers to participate in the curriculum renewal process.
- There is the need to develop teachers as reflective practitioners. Through developing curricula, teachers learn about their teaching style, about resources available, and expand their content knowledge.
- There needs to be teacher input and feedback concerning the development and implementation of curriculum for successful curriculum renewal.
- The universities need to have an incentive to work with teachers in the field.
- Preservice teachers need to be cognizant of their perspective role in reform.

Barriers

- Many schools would join consortia, but lack the financial resources.
- Political alignment is one of the hardest issues in curriculum renewal.
- There is confusion between district and state levels of understanding as to what is student-driven and what seems state mandate-driven.
- A pattern develops of investing time and money into professional development for teachers and then the teachers move to larger or more influential districts because of their expertise.
- When teachers are gone from their district for various curriculum committees, finding a substitute or the money to pay substitutes becomes a barrier.

- A lack of consensus as to amount of time teachers should spend on curriculum renewal was found to hinder curriculum renewal efforts. Especially, when the activities involved removing the teacher from classroom.

- A lack of consensus among teachers involved in curriculum renewal and those not involved at the district level forms a barrier.

- A lack of consensus from the community regarding school curriculum renewal poses a barrier.

- A lack of involvement from the whole community, teachers, parents, and students deters curriculum renewal.

- A lack of time for curriculum renewal is one of the greatest barriers of meeting the curriculum goals and priorities.

- Inservice days are at a minimum and many small districts do not have the money to bring somebody in specifically for curriculum renewal.

Summary of the 1995 Regional Rural Curriculum Renewal Symposium

Successful methods of curriculum renewal for small, rural schools need to be further supported. Practical and applicable methods need to be made available to the schools, such as teacher networks, consortia, community partnerships and school-university partnerships.

Further, the role of rural teachers in curriculum renewal is professionally incongruent. There is the view that the teacher's place is in the classroom and the view of teacher's place in actively reforming educational practices. There is a lack of consensus as to what the role the rural teacher plays in educational reform at the district and classroom level. Expectations of teachers in classroom and in educational reform vary by parent, school board, community members and administrator.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Stoops' studies have depicted ways rural districts in isolated settings have used three curriculum renewal approaches. The 1995 survey of curriculum renewal priorities in rural schools gave an indication of what the small, rural schools perceive as priorities in their area. And, the 1995 regional rural curriculum renewal symposium gave insight as to how to overcome some of the barriers to curriculum renewal. This is only the beginning. State departments of education, colleges of education, education professional organizations, educational service districts, school districts and teachers need to consider and be involved in the following processes for encouraging successful curriculum renewal in small, rural school districts.

- Heightening awareness of teachers, administrators and community members concerning current funding and renewal issues from the local level to the National level.

  Example: Recording data on the cyclical curriculum renewal process by district and state; and finding localized sources of curriculum and assessment information, processes and products.

- Building partnerships with local community businesses, universities and state agencies to assist in the continuous process of curriculum renewal.

  Example: Sharing curriculum resources and frameworks across district and state lines; and teachers joining professional education organizations.

- Preparing teachers to be educational reformers and to participate in curriculum renewal.

  Example: Offering incentives to teachers such as stipends; offering college courses designed to meet a specific need in the rural district; helping rural schools and teachers design and adapt their own methods for renewal; and preparing teachers to be managers of process, public relation experts, decisionmakers and instructional leaders.

- Emphasizing the administrator's and school board's role in supporting, encouraging, and facilitating the teacher's role in the renewal process.

  Example: Organizing a common inservice calendar for a region; locating professional development consultants who are available for site visits or are accessible through long-distance communication methods; documenting the incongruent expectations of the rural teacher by the school administrators, the school board, parents and the community members is needed; and investigating the use of site-based management.

- Finding sources of technical assistance to help build the capacity for curriculum renewal in each state is needed.

  Example: Hiring a curriculum director for a region; obtaining a graduate student intern for an academic year; and investigating the uses of long-distance telecommunications and advanced technologies.

CONCLUSION

Curricula is a major artery in the educational system. Each state spends millions of dollars developing curriculum and assessment tools. Curriculum renewal has become an increasingly important issue in small, rural schools. Yet, there are specific areas of concern in curriculum renewal, i.e. reassessing frameworks, identifying student achievement benchmarks, determining the content to be taught, finding appropriate instructional materials and methods, and using the appropriate assessment tools. To tie these issues together, it has been suggested that at the state level, questions should be asked as to under what conditions is a particular curriculum renewal strategy preferred over others by small schools? At the university level, preservice and inservice teachers should be prepared to be active educational reformers. They should be introduced to the process of curriculum renewal and to the process of educational reform as an ongoing responsibility in the school districts. At the district level, a grassroots strategic planning process for curriculum renewal is suggested with the main site of change at the building level. Each school district needs to weigh the factors of time, money and technological resources.

It was found that there **are** methods to assist in the curriculum renewal process that are cost and time effective. But, each district is unique and that there is no one "right" method for curriculum renewal. Unless curriculum renewal is seen as important for the students and the community itself, then the external pressure of educational reform will not be successful. While the external pressure may help to start the process, if it is the only rationale for educational reform, then the impetus for change dissolves. In order for curriculum renewal to be successful and endurable, it must be locally owned--a personal and individual process for each school district.

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